



E-NEWS AND E-NOTES FOR FRIDAY JANUARY 10th, 2025

STEPPIN' UP TO THE PLATE

Southwind Amazon, a veritable living example of a warhorse, retired after 398 lifetime starts and a modern-day record of 139 career wins. He was Northfield's Grand Old Man as he graced its Winners Circle an astounding 91 times over the years, including 59 trips with Ronnie Wrenn Jr in the stirrups. Not too many of us will see this record eclipsed in our lifetime while some of us were fortunate enough to witness several of the top horses make their indelible mark in history. Hats off to all of Harness racing's campaigners who have recently retired and went the distance.

THE ALL-TIME LEADERS

Horse	Starts	Wins	2nd	3rd	Earnings	Age	Record	"BATTING AVERAGE."
SOUTHWIND AMAZON	398	139	63	57	\$1,506,284	10	p1:48.3f	.485
NIFFIT	422	137	105	73	\$30,617	9	p2:05.1h	.521
RAMBLING WILLIE	305	128	69	43	\$2,038,219	7	p1:54.3f	.592
BESTDEALINTOWN	199	126	30	20	\$57,650	13	p1:57.1h	.750
BREEZE ON J	252	123	52	24	\$20,656	11	p2:03.3h	.657
TATTLER'S JET	462	120	76	73	\$326,429	12	p1:49.2z	.404

[FOR A COMPLETE LIST OF THE TOP PERFORMERS VISIT USTROTTING/TRACKSIDE](http://USTROTTING/TRACKSIDE)

A CASE OF THE WILLIES

It's rough to undergo the strain of an extended win streak. Even for Frank Ervin (1904-1991) the veteran horseman that turned out World Champions like grapes in a vineyard as he developed Bret Hanover. Bret was already a headline horse when he was a \$50,000 yearling in 1963 (\$420,000 today) and went undefeated in 24 two-year-old starts. Ervin breathed a sigh of relief after Bret suffered his first loss the next year in his 36th lifetime contest when he finished 2nd simply saying "Well, that's over."

Bret would rebound and capture 62 of 68 career calls to post including the Triple Crown and the Little Brown Jug as he collected \$922,616 for his efforts.

Tough is the horse that modestly begins their career and climbs through the ranks while facing fresher foes week in and week out, year in and year out.

And when you say tough say **Rambling Willie** who made his debut in Ohio in May of 1973 at the Mercer County Fair as Doug Ballinger announced that race. He finished a non-descript 5th and later would be sold for \$15,000 (\$86,000 nowadays) journeying throughout Indiana, Illinois, and Ohio as he moved up through the overnight races. He became the sport's elite with a World Record mile of 1:54.3f at Brandywine Raceway in Wilmington, Delaware. He would make stops at Liberty Bell Park, Yonkers, and Roosevelt Raceway, as he did Battle with the Best and won, many times from the outside post position. He had various caretakers during his lifetime campaign as his victories tallied up and most of them handled the pressure well.

I recall being in the Invitational at The Meadowlands one wet night and I was a bit antsy about going against the Legend but I was thinking "maybe... she *DOES* like an off-track." After I got my ears pinned finishing 7th and came back to reality, they told me "Willie don't get beat in the mud."

At Freehold in the Graduate Series where Willie finished 2nd to a four-year-old Governor Skipper in his prime and I still couldn't make the board, dry track or not.

Willie would journey up North where he had captured The Canadian Pacing Derby in three different years and put in another great performance. We shipped together to Vernon Downs in New York where he was a Star

amongst Stars as he made headlines wherever he went. In his later years he made a 17-track promotional tour and even ventured into New England. While the racing fans were excited the horsemen were put off a bit with the \$10,000 Invitational purse that was being offered. You could feel it in the air and his caretaker Mike wasn't at ease. The Big Race came - along with a big crowd - and Willie (now 11) got rimmed in a fast opening quarter to finish 5th. As the horses came off the track "Old Face," the leading trainer/driver at Foxboro, stopped by me and growled with a nod of his head: "that'll teach 'em to come up here and try and take *OUR* money!"

"But," I looked at him, "you're from the *Maritimes*." He just grunted and walked away.

Willie would continue to attract crowds and win before he was retired at 13 to the Kentucky Horse Park. His final tallies of 128 wins in 305 lifetime starts earned him \$2,038,219 or an average of \$6,682.00 each time he went behind the gate.

And that is enough for anyone to want a case of the Willies.



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